

CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY

CIA HISTORICAL REVIEW PROGRAM
RELEASE IN FULL

8 August 1962

MEMORANDUM TO HOLDERS OF NIE 11-8-62: "SOVIET CAPABILITIES FOR LONG RANGE ATTACK," dated 6 July 1962, TOP SECRET

SUBJECT: Revision of Estimated Soviet Strength in Heavy Bombers

1. A new assessment of Soviet heavy bombers and tankers in Long Range Aviation, conducted subsequent to the approval of NIE 11-8-62 by the United States Intelligence Board on 6 July 1962, indicates that the estimate of BEAR turboprop heavy bombers in NIE 11-8-62 was too low. We now believe that there are about 70-80 BEARS in operational units, rather than 55 as estimated in NIE 11-8-62. We also conclude, with respect to BISON jet heavy bombers and tankers, that the range of 100-120 aircraft in operational units is a better estimate than the single figure of 110 given in NIE 11-8-62. On this basis, we now estimate that the USSR has approximately 170-200 heavy bombers and tankers in operational units as of mid-1962.

2. We continue to believe that production of BISONS and BEARS has ceased. We estimate that Soviet operational strength in these aircraft will remain fairly stable for the next year or so and then decline gradually through normal attrition. The table below revises and supersedes the numerical estimates of Soviet heavy bombers and tankers in paragraphs 20 and 29 of NIE 11-8-62:

Heavy Bombers and Tankers	Mid-1962	Mid-1963	Mid-1964	Mid-1965	Mid-1966	Mid-1967
BISON	100-120	100-120	95-115	90-110	80-100	70- 90
BEAR	70- 80	70- 80	65- 75	60- 70	50- 60	40- 50
Approximate Totals ..	170-200	170-200	160-190	150-180	130-160	110-140

3. All members of the USIB agree that Soviet strength in BISONS and BEARS is likely to fall within the foregoing ranges. As indicated in his dissenting footnotes to paragraphs 20 and 29 of NIE 11-8-62, however, the Assistant Chief of Staff, Intelligence, USAF, believes that total Soviet heavy bomber and tanker strength will remain at approxi-

mately 200 aircraft, with the probable introduction of a follow-on supersonic heavy bomber into Long Range Aviation units beginning in 1964. To the table above, he would add 10 follow-on heavy bombers in mid-1964, 20 in mid-1965, 40 in mid-1966, and 60 in mid-1967. The majority of the USIB continues to believe that BISONS and BEARS will probably comprise the entire Soviet force of heavy bombers and tankers over the next five years.